

Message Text

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ACTION IO-13

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07

LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 OIC-02 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06

AF-10 ARA-06 EA-07 NEA-10 /118 W

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FM AMEMBASSY ATHENS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 814

INFO USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L ATHENS 4887

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB ILO GR

SUBJECT: ILO 63D INTERNATIONAL LABOR CONFERENCE: MEETING WITH
MINISTER OF LABOR LASKARIS

REF: A. ATHENS 4694 (NOTAL);

B. STATE 102699; C. STATE 103404; D. STATE 104945

1. THE DCM AND THE POLITICAL COUNSELOR CALLED ON MINISTER OF LABOR LASKARIS MAY 24 TO DISCUSS THE SUBJECT OF THE 63D INTERNATIONAL LABOR CONFERENCE (ILC). THE DEMARCHE WAS MADE ALONG THE LINES SUGGESTED IN REF D, DRAWING, AS APPROPRIATE, ON REFS B AND C. LASKARIS ASKED IF WE COULD GIVE HIM AN INFORMAL PAPER SUMMARIZING US VIEWS ON THE CRITICAL ISSUES BEFORE THE ILC AND WE LEFT WITH HIM A COPY OF THE PAPER WHICH THE AMBASSADOR HAD GIVEN FOREIGN MINISTER BITSIOS (REF A). WE ALSO GAVE THE MINISTER OF LABOR THE NAMES OF THE US DELEGATES TO THE ILC AND TOLD HIM THAT THE US DELEGATION LOOKED FORWARD TO CONTINUING DISCUSSIONS WITH HIM AND HIS COLLEAGUES IN GENEVA.

2. AFTER EXPRESSING APPRECIATION FOR OUR VISIT, MINISTER
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LASKARIS STATED THAT HE ALSO LOOKED FORWARD TO WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE US DELEGATION IN GENEVA. MOREOVER, HE CONSIDERED THAT GOG OBJECTIVES IN THE ILO CLOSELY PARALLELED THOSE OF THE US, AND AT THE ILC HE AND THE GREEK DELEGATION WOULD VOTE IN SUPPORT OF PROPOSALS AIMED AT PRESERVING THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES AND IMPORTANT WORK OF THE ILO. AFTER QUICKLY LOOKING OVER THE PAPER WE

HAD GIVEN HIM ON THE CRITICAL ISSUES WHICH WILL BE CONSIDERED BY THE ILC, HE SAID THAT HE SAW NO DIFFICULTY IN SUPPORTING OUR POSITIONS. HOWEVER, HE POINTED OUT, AS A GENERAL RULE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY (EC) CONSIDERATIONS WOULD WEIGH HEAVILY INSOFAR AS GREECE'S POSITION ON ANY GIVEN ISSUE WAS CONCERNED, IN VIEW OF THE HIGH IMPORTANCE THE GOG PLACES ON ITS ENTRY INTO THE EC.

3. LASKARIS WENT ON TO SAY HE WAS GLAD TO HEAR THAT THE US DOES NOT DESIRE TO LEAVE THE ILO AND HOPED THAT OUR DECISION WOULD BE TO REMAIN IN THE ORGANIZATION. HE SAID THAT CONTINUED AMERICAN PARTICIPATION IN THE ILO WAS NOT ONLY IMPORTANT BUT ESSENTIAL. EQUALLY IMPORTANT AND ESSENTIAL, IN HIS VIEW, WAS THE RETURN OF AMERICAN TRADE UNIONS TO THE ICFTU. LASKARIS SAID THAT HE DID NOT SAY THIS ONLY BECAUSE OF THE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS THE US COULD MAKE IN THESE TWO ORGANIZATIONS, BUT ALSO BECAUSE HE BELIEVED VERY STRONGLY THAT THERE WAS A GREAT NEED FOR AMERICAN LEADERSHIP IN THE ILO AND THE ICFTU, ESPECIALLY IN THE FACE OF COMMUNIST EFFORTS ON THE INTERNATIONAL LABOR FRONT. IN THIS CONNECTION LASKARIS AGAIN EXPRESSED CONCERN (AS HE HAD TO EMBASSY OFFICERS PREVIOUSLY--ATHENS 4042) OVER THE ACTIVITIES OF THE WORLD CONFEDERATION OF LABOR, THE OLD "CHRISTIANS." IN MANY WAYS, HE ADDED, THE WCL, WITH ITS OPENINGS TO THE EAST, WAS MORE DANGEROUS THAN THE COMMUNISTS BECAUSE ITS ACTIVITIES PERMITTED COMMUNISTS TO GAIN RESPECTABILITY.

4. MINISTER LASKARIS THEN TOOK THE OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE
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A GENERAL REVIEW OF THE GREEK TRADE UNION SITUATION TO DCM MILLS, SINCE THIS WAS THEIR FIRST OFFICIAL MEETING. HE SAID THAT, IN GENERAL, HE WAS NOT VERY OPTIMISTIC OVER PROSPECTS IN THE LONG RUN IN THE STRUGGLE WITH THE COMMUNISTS IN THE TRADE UNION FIELD. ALTHOUGH IT HAS BEEN POSSIBLE THUS FAR TO MAINTAIN NON-COMMUNIST CONTROL OF THE VARIOUS TRADE UNION ORGANIZATIONS, THE COMMUNISTS WERE EXTREMELY ACTIVE ORGANIZATIONALLY AND WERE FOLLOWING A LONG TERM STRATEGY. IN THIS, UNLIKE THE NON-COMMUNISTS, THEY HAD CONSIDERABLE FINANCIAL RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THEIR EFFORTS (INCLUDING SOVIET EMBASSY FUNDS AND DIRECTION), WERE BETTER ORGANIZED AND HAD MORE EXPERIENCED CADRE. THE LATTER WAS ONE OF THE MOST SERIOUS WEAKNESSES OF NON-COMMUNIST TRADE UNIONS, ESPECIALLY SINCE MANY OF THE OLDER, EXPERIENCED TRADE UNIONISTS AMONG CONSERVATIVES AND RIGHTISTS HAD BEEN TAINTED BY THEIR ASSOCIATION WITH THE MILITARY DICTATORSHIP AND WERE NO LONGER COMPLETELY ACCEPTABLE. HE BELIEVED, HOWEVER, THAT IN ORDER TO CONFRONT THE COMMUNIST CHALLENGE, IT WAS NECESSARY FOR ALL NON-COMMUNISTS TO JOIN TOGETHER

AND COOPERATE.

5. LASKARIS SAID THAT HE WOULD HEAD THE GREEK DELEGATION TO THE ILC AND WOULD BE IN GENEVA FOR A SHORT PERIOD DURING THE INITIAL STAGE, AROUND JUNE 6-10. AFTER HE LEAVES, THE GREEK DELEGATION WILL BE HEADED BY THE LABOR MINISTRY'S SECY GENERAL, CONSTANTINE MALATESTAS (WHO DOES NOT SPEAK ENGLISH). THE OTHER GOVERNMENT DELEGATE WILL BE THE GREEK PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE TO UN ORGANIZATIONS IN GENEVA, AMBASSADOR METAXAS. THE EMPLOYER DELEGATE WILL BE IOANNIS MITSOS, FORMER PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERATION OF GREEK INDUSTRIALISTS, WHOSE ALTERNATE AND TECHNICAL ADVISER WILL BE CHARILAOS CHARAKAS, LEGAL ADVISER OF THE FEDERATION. THE WORKER DELEGATE WILL BE PANAYOTIS THEOFANOPOULOS, ALTERNATE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF GREEK WORKERS.

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